

**MANSFIELD DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP
BOARD OF DIRECTORS SPECIAL MEETING**

Thursday, January 26, 2012

**Mansfield Town Hall
Town Council Chambers
4 S. Eagleville Road**

4:00 PM

MINUTES

Present: Steve Bacon, Harry Birkenruth, David Lindsay, Frank McNabb, Toni Moran, Richard Orr, Betsy Paterson, Chris Paulhus, Alex Roe, Steve Rogers, Kristin Schwab, Bill Simpson, and Ted Yungclas

Staff: Cynthia van Zelm, Kathleen Paterson

Guests: John Simone, Executive Director, and Kimberley Parsons-Whitaker, Associate Director of the CT Main Street Center; and Carl Rosa, CEO of Main Street Waterbury

1. Call to Order

Board Vice President Steve Bacon called the meeting to order at 4:10 pm in Board President Philip Lodewick's absence.

Mr. Bacon noted that June 2012 will represent the 11th anniversary of the Mansfield Downtown Partnership. The 10th anniversary saw construction underway. Now that Storrs Center is under construction, there is the need to evaluate what comes next with respect to the new downtown.

Ms. van Zelm welcomed John Simone, Executive Director, and Kimberley Parsons-Whitaker, Associate Director of the CT Main Street Center; and Carl Rosa, CEO of Main Street Waterbury. She thanked them for attending the Board meeting to talk about the management of downtowns and some of the activities that management entails.

2. Mansfield Downtown Partnership Future Planning

Ms. Parsons-Whitaker presented an overview of downtown management and the CT Main Street program in a Power Point presentation.

Ms. Parsons-Whitaker made the case that downtowns need to be managed. She said the Main Street approach came out of efforts by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to promote the value of downtowns. She said that designated Main Street programs typically have a budget of \$120,000 to \$550,000 annually and have full-time professional staff.

Ms. Parsons-Whitaker showed examples of partnerships between towns and colleges to revitalize and promote their downtowns including Ohio State, Bucknell, University of Pennsylvania, University of Delaware, Yale and the University of Hartford. Ms. Parsons-Whitaker highlighted the partnership between the University of Hartford and the CT Main Street Upper Albany Avenue organization on a micro-business program. Business owners on upper Albany Avenue needed skills and the University of Hartford students needed experience. The students assisted the businesses on-site and incorporated a "train the trainer" program. By 2008, 50 businesses and 240 students participated.

Carl Rosa discussed the many partnerships that the Main Street Waterbury program has including with the UConn Waterbury campus.

Some of the projects Main Street Waterbury has implemented under its Design Committee include: adopting a business window for beautification, adopting planters in the downtown, judged holiday decoration contest, facade improvement program. Main Street Waterbury also has a design review panel.

Under the Promotion Committee, the following initiatives have been undertaken: pole banner sponsorship program, annual Brass City Brew Fest (major fundraiser which generates \$100,000 for the city that day), dining guide, and parking website.

Under the Organization Committee, the following has been implemented: downtown business watch (meet quarterly), monthly networking happy hour event (a restaurant sponsors each month), "Celebrating Downtown" publication, membership drive, and facebook page.

Under Economic Restructuring, the following initiatives have been implemented: business improvement workshops i.e., on e-commerce (free event), maintain an available properties list, digital photo gallery of all businesses, recruit businesses.

Mr. Rosa said the UConn provides a lot of in-kind support including hosting the Main Street Waterbury Board meetings, serving on the Board, providing interns, and providing volunteers.

Mr. Rosa said, since 2003, Main Street Waterbury has volunteers who have worked 15,000 volunteer hours. This is a \$404,000 value to Main Street Waterbury.

Toni Moran asked if Main Street Waterbury has brought housing to its downtown. Also, what has been Mr. Rosa's experience with college students in the downtown? Finally, can membership in Main Street Waterbury be required of tenants in the downtown?

Mr. Rosa said they are trying to increase workforce and market-rate housing in the downtown. He said there are incentive zone, tax abatement and facade improvement programs to attract housing and commercial development downtown. Mr. Rosa noted that a developer had created market rate housing in downtown recently that was rented very quickly. Mr. Rosa said that downtown development needs to lead with housing, not with retail.

John Simone said with respect to the question about membership requirements, he feels the key question is how to fund a downtown program. He said that Storrs Center is the creation of a high quality development. When sales go up, the value of the buildings go up.

Mr. Simone advocated looking at the creation of a Special Services District (SSD) which creates an additional tax on the property owner(s) to be invested in the downtown. West Hartford created a SSD in the Blue Back Square area. The money generated in the SSD goes toward the management of Blue Back Square.

Ms. Parsons-Whitaker noted that working with the students in a positive way will be a major initiative for the downtown organization.

Chris Paulhus asked how many parking garages are in the downtown. Mr. Rosa said that Waterbury has four municipal parking garages. Mr. Paulhus asked if there were concerns about people using the garages. Mr. Rosa said while it may not appear that shopping malls charge for parking, they pass on the common area maintenance charges to their tenants who pass it on in terms of their prices to customers.

Mr. Simone said that in a typical downtown (not New York City), he does not hear that the cost of parking in a garage is a deterrent to people coming downtown.

Frank McNabb asked for an evaluation of the threats to the Storrs Center downtown. Ms. Parsons-Whitaker said that one of the concerns she has is that businesses do not keep uniform business hours. This hurts adjacent businesses if a particular business is not open at the same time. Mr. Rosa said the mantra of "if my neighbor succeeds, then I succeed," is true.

Mr. Simone said a threat would also be that there is no managed program for Storrs Center. Mr. Rosa said a managed system can create good town spirit.

Ms. Parsons-Whitaker said another challenge will be to balance the need of the current relocated businesses with the regional and national businesses. It will be important to establish relationships with the business owners.

Kristin Schwab asked if Waterbury has a town square and plazas. Mr. Rosa said Waterbury has one town square and two green spaces. The city recently had a town meeting to look at how those spaces can be used. Mr. Rosa said one of the goals is to bring some commercial carts on the town square.

Ms. Schwab asked about the relationship with Main Street Waterbury and city planners. Ms. Parsons-Whitaker said the downtown organization can often be the convener by helping to articulate community needs. She said a key role with respect to public spaces would be assisting and promoting safety on those spaces.

Ms. Moran said that Storrs Center is unique as there is only one owner. How does the Partnership work with businesses when their obligations are to the owner? Ms. Parsons-Whitaker said she sees the Partnership as the liaison between the business owners and the property owner.

The Board will continue its discussion on strategic planning at a future meeting.

3. Adjourn

Mr. Paulhus made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Bacon seconded the motion. The motion was approved and the meeting adjourned at 6:05 pm.

Minutes taken by Cynthia van Zelm